

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A ligand-binding solid surface comprising:
 - a) a soft metal solid support and
 - b) a heterobifunctional spacer having at least two functional groups, one of said functional groups comprising a reactive terminal moiety configured to bind a ligand, ~~only~~ and one of said functional groups comprising a soft base, said spacer being non-covalently chemi- or physisorbed to said soft metal solid support via soft metal-soft base bonding wherein the soft base is selected from the group consisting of succinimidyl-6-(biotinamido)hexanoate and succinimidyl 6-[6-(((iodoacetyl)amino)-hexanoyl)amino]hexanoate.
2. (currently amended) A ligand-binding solid surface of claim 1 in which the soft metal solid support is selected from the group consisting of silver, copper, gold, platinum (II), mercury, mercury (II), thallium, cadmium (II), platinum (IV) and palladium (II) covered surfaces.
3. (currently amended) A ligand-binding solid surface of claim 1 in which the heterobifunctional spacer comprises a hydrocarbon having a chain length of about 10 to about 40 carbon atoms.
4. (currently amended) A ligand-binding solid surface of claim 1 wherein the heterobifunctional spacer comprises succinimidyl-6-(biotinamido)hexanoate.
5. (currently amended) A method for preparing a ligand-binding solid surface, comprising:
 - a) selecting a soft metal solid support; and
 - b) non-covalently immobilizing a heterobifunctional spacer on said solid support via soft metal-soft base bonding, said spacer having at least two functional groups, one of said functional groups comprising a reactive terminal moiety configured to bind a ligand, ~~only~~ and one of said functional groups comprising a soft base, wherein the soft base is selected from the group consisting of succinimidyl-6-

(biotinamido)hexanoate and succinimidyl 6-[6-(((iodoacetyl)amino)-hexanoyl)amino]hexanoate.

6. (previously presented) A method of claim 5 in which the soft metal solid support is selected from the group consisting of silver, copper, gold, platinum (II), mercury, mercury (II), thallium, cadmium (II), platinum (IV) and palladium (II) covered surfaces.

7. (previously presented) A method of claim 5 in which the heterobifunctional spacer comprises a hydrocarbon of about 10 to about 40 atoms in length.

8. (previously presented) A method of claim 5 wherein the heterobifunctional spacer comprises succinimidyl-6-(biotinamido)hexanoate.

9. (currently amended) An assay system comprising a plurality of ligand-binding solid surfaces of claim 1.

10. (currently amended) A method for detecting the presence of a biological molecule comprising exposing a sample containing biological molecules to a ligand-binding solid surface of claim 1, ~~wherein the heterobifunctional spacer includes a ligand for binding to said biological molecules.~~

11. (currently amended) A ligand-binding solid surface of claim 1 ~~further comprising~~ wherein said reactive terminal moiety comprises an oligonucleotide linked to said heterobifunctional spacer.

12. (currently amended) A ligand-binding solid surface of claim 1 in which the heterobifunctional spacer comprises succinimidyl 6-[6-(((iodoacetyl)amino)-hexanoyl)amino]hexanoate.

13. (previously presented) A method of claim 5 wherein the heterobifunctional spacer comprises succinimidyl 6-[6-(((iodoacetyl)amino)-hexanoyl)amino]hexanoate.

14-24. (canceled)